Into the Unknown

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Into the Unknown

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Summary

“Taste is housed in parts of the mind that precede pity.” Hannibal shifted so that he was once again right in Will’s space, his intense stare burning into Will’s cheek. “Pity has no place at the table.”

A re-write of Will's experience of the scene in Tome-Wan when he comes home to find Mason Verger in his house, as well as what happened immediately after Hannibal snapped his neck.

Notes

This is my first Hannibal fic, but the first of many planned :) Thank you to everyone who supported my writing, y'all are so sweet! I really feel like a part of the fannibal family :)

A HUGE shoutout to the lovely Maria who beta'd this and encouraged my writing!! Ily so much <3

Here it is, I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Will drove back to Wolf Trap because he didn't know what else to do.

He felt tired. When he woke up alone, head splitting from being pistol-whipped, he blearily took in the blood smeared on the concrete and felt a pang of something – Disappointment? Relief? – when he coaxed a half-eaten torso up from the pig pit that was obviously not Hannibal Lecter's.

Will had quickly realized that Hannibal had done just what Will had wanted him to – he had escaped, probably slaughtering Mason Verger and his henchmen in the process. But why did he leave Will there, unconscious and alone?

It wasn't what he expected, but Will couldn't bring himself to be angry about it. Honestly, he was grateful that Hannibal hadn't touched him when he was passed out. He was still pissed off about him shoving Abigail's ear down his throat while he was unconscious.

As it was, Will was tired. He dragged himself out of the pig barn and into one of the many black SUVs the Vergers seemed to keep on hand at all times. He found the keys easily enough and the engine roared to life, giving Will acceptable transportation back home. His head throbbed as he stared at the monotonous country road in the dark, and he couldn't help but yearn for the warmth of his bed and the excitement of his dogs. His foot pressed down on the gas pedal in his haste to get home quicker.

As he drove, his mind reflected on the events that had just taken place at the Verger estate. Mason had rounded up both Will and Hannibal, obviously intending to kill them both, much like two birds with one stone. Will smiled, a slight twist of his lips, when he remembered how Hannibal looked hanging directly in front of him in a straitjacket. He looked like the cat that ate the canary, a predator with no fear even as Will held a knife to his neck. Will supposed he was right for not being afraid, as Will had set him free instead of slicing into him.

Will's smirk melted into a tired sigh. Why had he let Hannibal loose? Just a few days ago he had fantasized this exact situation, with Hannibal strung up over Mason's pig pit and Will cutting his throat before lowering him down to be devoured by the lesser animals. In the fantasy he had felt exhilarated and righteous, and Will remembered smiling a genuine smile

when Hannibal had asked him about it in their session. After all, doing bad things to bad people felt good.

So why hadn't he acted out his fantasy, when he had the perfect opportunity to do so? Will gripped the steering wheel tightly. He could tell himself that it was because he knew Mason would just kill him straight after Hannibal, and that Hannibal was his best shot of getting out of there alive. He could tell himself it was because his latent morality kicked in and refused to let him take a life. But Will knew that wasn't the truth; and after doing it for so long, he was starting to get tired of lying to himself.

There were a couple of reasons Will could admit to that explained why he didn't kill Hannibal when he had the chance. One, Will wanted to kill Hannibal on his own terms – not because Mason Verger, or anyone else, manipulated him into doing so. Hannibal had betrayed Will incredibly, and Will was not going to let him off with an easy death or any punishment that Will didn't personally choose. He needed something that honored the intimate connection they had, the bond flooded with manipulation, anger, hate and violence – but also with understanding and acceptance.

This connection he felt with Hannibal was probably the strongest tether Will had ever felt with another person before, a fact that never failed to both infuriate and satisfy him. Will told Hannibal a few weeks ago that he wanted to kill him with his bare hands, and that was the truth – there was no other method that would feel so deserved, so right in response to the experiences and feelings between them. His adrenaline at killing Randall Tier only amplified that desire.

Will supposed that was the first reason why he didn't kill Hannibal when he was strung up and helpless. He wanted to be the one in control of Hannibal's fate, and he wanted to give Hannibal the ending he deserved after all the things he did to Will.

The second reason Will could acknowledge wasn't nearly as easy to accept, and that was the spike of revulsion he felt as he contemplated the weight of Mason's knife in his hand as he raised it to press against Hannibal's throat. It was a gut feeling of aversion, a reflex from deep within screaming at him: *This is wrong. You don't want to kill him. You don't want him to die.*

Will allowed himself to remember the feeling before he filed it away deep in his mind to ignore, shoving it into the same neglected place as the feeling of Hannibal's hand gripping his

neck as they stood together over Clark Ingram. The locks in Will's mind holding those things back weren't as strong as he wished they were.

His feelings around Hannibal were getting stronger, particularly the feelings of kinship. Will was afraid of what they meant if he was allowing Hannibal's feelings to blur with his own. He was even more afraid of what they meant if he wasn't.

Will was pulled away from his thoughts as the car's headlights illuminated his house in the darkness. He pulled into the drive and got out of the uncomfortable car, the snow crunching under his feet as he walked towards his home. None of the lights were on, but as Will got closer he frowned at the sight of Winston sitting alone on the porch, seemingly waiting for him.

"Hey, Winston," Will remarked, slightly confused as he bent down to scratch his dog's ears. "Where's everyone else?"

There was a muffled yelp from inside the house and Will straightened up, instantly on guard. Were his dogs okay? Was Hannibal here? Will didn't know what he was going to find inside, and he opened the front door with caution.

He was met with the familiar sound of his dogs eating – maybe his neighbor just stopped by to feed them dinner? – and he walked inside the dark house a few steps before a somewhat familiar voice cut through the dead silence.

"I just *love* your dogs," a man said from Will's chair by the fireplace. His face was turned away from where the moonlight fell into the room from the wide window, but his bloody hands were clearly visible as they moved to feed the rest of Will's dogs something unidentifiable. "How is that? Is that good? Do you want another piece? How about you? That's a good girl! Sit. Sit!"

As the man talked, Will recognized his voice, although it was a little distorted. "Mason?"

"I adopted some dogs from the shelter," Mason Verger continued, all but ignoring Will's presence. "Two dogs that were friends. I had them in a cage together with no food and fresh

water.” One of the smaller dogs, Mia, eagerly nipped at the piece of flesh Mason offered her and Will got a glimpse of her fur in the moonlight. It was streaked with blood. “One of them died hungry. The other had a warm meal.”

Mason turned to face Will directly and shook his finger in mock disapproval. “I should’ve put you in a cage with Dr. Lecter. I’m curious what would’ve happened.” He spoke teasingly, and Will realized with a touch of surprise that he was high.

Will tilted his head, attempting to get a better view of Mason through the shadows that wrapped around him. “What are you feeding my dogs?” he asked slowly, the little clues starting to piece together.

Mason barked out a laugh as he casually cut another strip of flesh from his ruined face. “Just me!”

Will stared at him, his eyes tracking the slow but steady drip of blood. After the initial shock and disgust wore off, Will gazed upon Mason’s face with detached coldness. All the skin below his eyes and nose had been flayed off, in a grotesque and obviously amateur way. The facial muscle was exposed, slick with red blood, and Will could hear the tendons squish around as Mason laughed maniacally and instructed the dogs. “Sit, sit!”

It was almost messy, the way Will could see Mason’s jaw working, his tongue flicking out, between the ragged wet bits of flesh that used to be his lower face. Will inhaled deeply, the metallic scent of Mason’s blood filling his nostrils and lightly touching his tongue. It was in that moment that Will realized someone was behind him.

He turned his head to the side just enough to see Hannibal standing beside him, watching Mason with something close to cruel pride glittering in his dark eyes. There was dried blood on his face, some from a nasty looking blow to his temple but also some that looked like second-hand spatter.

Will’s breath did not hitch, nor did he startle at the man’s sudden appearance. When he constantly felt as if he was walking around with Hannibal Lecter under his skin, the man’s physical presence felt familiar. It wasn’t being in his house that made Will feel at home at this very moment.

In any case, Will wasn't surprised to see him. He had expected something like this to happen after he woke up alone at the Verger estate. He knew Hannibal wouldn't simply leave things like that, not when he wanted to drag Will into his world so desperately. He wasn't doing a bad job of it, either.

With Hannibal here, Will now knew exactly what had happened. He drugged Mason and manipulated the situation to gently push him into cutting off his own face. Will wasn't angry or upset or even disgusted by this – Mason Verger was a pig, and he deserved all that he had coming to him.

What Will found himself dwelling on was the fact that Hannibal had taken him to Wolf Trap to do this, instead of some undiscoverable, neutral location where nobody would ever know what happened.

Will felt a thrill shoot through him as Hannibal gracefully sauntered around him to pause near the door and he knew. He knew that Hannibal wanted Will to be here for this. Hannibal was inviting him behind the veil, inviting him to see the violence he was capable of first-hand, and inviting him to share it with him - inviting Will to participate.

"What Mason is experiencing isn't restricted to reality, so reality has been forced to adapt," Hannibal said in his pleasant doctor voice, like he was explaining how to recover from the common cold and not how a man they both hated - a man who just tried to kill them both a few hours ago - had sawed off the skin from his own face under the influence of whatever god-awful cocktail of drugs Hannibal had given him.

Will stepped towards Hannibal and met his gaze. "He fed his face to my dogs."

Hannibal titled his head. "He broadened their palates. As I broadened yours." He glanced at Mason then took a few steps closer to Will, closing the distance between them. "Murder or mercy?"

Will stared into his waiting eyes and thought about it before shaking his head slightly, voice coming out low and slightly annoyed. "There is no mercy. We *make* mercy, manufacture it in the parts that have overgrown our basic, reptile brain."

Hannibal considered him before responding. “Then there is no murder. We make murder too. It matters only to us.”

It did matter to them, Will thought. It mattered to Hannibal so much that he made murder not out of necessity or compulsion, but out of pleasure. And it mattered to Will as something he reserved for those who tried to murder him first.

He stayed silent, but Hannibal wasn’t deterred. His magnetic eyes pulled Will in as he continued, “You know too well you possess all the elements to make murder.” He paused in thought. “Perhaps mercy too, but murder you understand uncomfortably well.”

Will’s anger at Hannibal ignited at those words. He only understood murder because Hannibal had pushed him into making it. He resented the fact that Hannibal caught on so easily to his inner darkness, the stuff that he had been pushing down and ignoring for years. Will was angry that Hannibal manipulated him into drawing that darkness out, and wanted to simultaneously destroy it out of spite and let it loose to devour Hannibal in revenge.

“I’m hungry!” Mason exclaimed in his chair, throwing his hands up like a child having a tantrum. Will ignored him in favor of staring Hannibal down, but the doctor had other ideas and broke their gaze, turning to Mason with an air of authority.

“Eat your nose then,” he said simply.

“Eat my - ” Mason blinked and touched his nose, seemingly testing its consistency. “Eat my nose?”

Will looked over his shoulder at the disfigured man and raised an eyebrow. There was a second where Mason appeared to be thinking about it, then he shrugged before lifting his knife up and easily cutting off his nose, just like Hannibal instructed. Will slowly turned around to face Mason, watching as more blood poured out of the newly created, gaping wound on his face. The moonlight glinted off his knife and illuminated the bone newly protruding, now unprotected by any cartilage.

Mason popped the flesh of his nose into his mouth and chewed, the motion resulting in more wet sounds and gushes of blood from his skinless jaws. Will couldn't be bothered with the mess or by Mason's actions and was unable to feel a shred of sympathy for him. The man was, in Hannibal's words, distasteful and rude. Mason deserved this, and Will could not stop staring at him while he unknowingly mutilated himself.

Whether he was entranced by Mason's humiliation or by the quiet, irresistible power that Hannibal displayed at orchestrating it, Will refused to say.

Mason smacked whatever was left of his lips together and declared, "I have a taste and consistency that's similar to that… of a chicken gizzard!"

"Taste is housed in parts of the mind that precede pity." Hannibal shifted so that he was once again right in Will's space, his intense stare burning into Will's cheek. "Pity has no place at the table."

Will took a breath and watched with coldness as Mason burped rudely. "I'm full of myself!" he cackled.

Will took another breath and considered his options. There weren't a lot, and he barely examined them before he settled on his default for the past few weeks – the one where he attempted to manipulate Hannibal, equal and opposite to how Hannibal was attempting to manipulate him.

"I'm not going to kill him," he declared.

Will's eyes flickered over to finally meet Hannibal's. The doctor's face was shadowed but that didn't prevent Will from seeing the expression of displeasure on it. "He was going to feed you to his pigs. After he fed them me," he replied.

"Weren't you Mason?" Hannibal called, his eyes never leaving Will's.

There was a slight pause before Mason admitted, in a ‘what can you do about it’ manner, “I was.”

Will finally turned his body back to mirror Hannibal’s and stepped further into the space between them, still holding eye contact. “He’s your patient, Doctor,” he mocked lightly, daring Hannibal into action. “You do what you think is best for him.”

Hannibal considered his words and looked at Mason briefly before turning back to Will again. Those eyes stared into his own, and Will knew they saw right through him. Hannibal knew what he was doing, but that was just fine. Gone were the days where they could manipulate each other without knowledge. Well… almost. Hannibal didn’t quite know the reason behind why Will wanted him to kill Mason.

His own words to Jack Crawford a few days ago were ringing in Will’s ears. *When Hannibal tries to kill Mason Verger I’ll arrest him, and you’ll have two witnesses.*

However, as Hannibal broke their shared gaze to calmly walk towards Mason with the grace and intent of a panther stalking its prey, arresting Hannibal was the last thing on Will’s mind.

He wanted to see – see the beast that had been so carefully hidden from him all this time, the one Will was only allowed to see a few glimpses of. He knew Hannibal wanted him to see it too. Why else would he bring Mason Verger to his home, when he knew neither of them would allow him to leave alive?

Hannibal might have preferred to see the beast inside Will burst forth, but he was amenable to letting his own out to play, if Will requested it.

Will watched with bated breath as Hannibal confidently walked to stand behind Mason’s chair, but he made no move to stop what he knew was about to happen. Hannibal was entirely focused when he placed one hand on the back of Mason’s head and another on his chin, and with one fluid motion used the momentum of his body to forcefully snap Mason’s neck with a loud *crunch.*

Will inhaled sharply to cover up the gasp that was threatening its way out of his throat, but it wasn't a gasp of fear or surprise. No, it was a gasp of arousal.

Witnessing Hannibal easily kill a man – kill Mason Verger, someone who *deserved* it – made Will's body flush with all the feelings he had been trying to ignore for months. All the sharp moments of attraction he had felt for Hannibal flooded out all at once at the sight of him snapping someone's neck. Will had never seen anything so violent, so primal, so arousing, so *right.*

Will couldn't take his eyes off Hannibal in that moment even if he tried. Their intimate connection sizzled between them in the spaces between moonlight, and Will's darkness had never felt so strong as it did in that moment, not even when he killed Randall Tier. Normally dwelling right under his skin, it now felt like it was flowing off him in waves, and at any moment Hannibal would see and descend upon him like the apex predator he was. Will breathed deeply and could no longer ignore the fact that he wanted Hannibal to devour him.

Hannibal was as calm and put-together as Will hoped he still looked to be, checking Mason for any sign of life before settling his head onto the back of the chair and casually wiping his bloodied hands on Mason's shirt. He walked back towards Will, and Will desperately tried to get himself under control so that Hannibal wouldn't smell the arousal on him.

It seemed to work, since Hannibal didn't speak but instead came to stand directly in front of Will, further into his space than previously. Will held his head high and wore an indifferent expression.

"What now?" Will asked. "We display him like Randall Tier?"

Will did not expect himself to break the delicate silence between them, and he definitely did not expect himself to say *that.* Randall Tier had been a big step in his becoming, but he had been a passive one. Killing him had been self-defense, and mutilating him had been done both to honor him and to fool Hannibal into trusting him. This, however…

Will could not hide behind the excuse of self-defense or maintaining his "cover". He had stood by and watched, encouraged even, Hannibal kill a defenseless man. The implications of his actions were just now starting to hit him, but all Will could think of was how *easy* it had been. How right it felt. And now he was fully ready to deal with the aftermath.

Hannibal tilted his head, eyes glinting in the moonlight. “I did not kill him, Will. Rather, he is unconscious and paralyzed.”

Will blinked. “What?”

Hannibal’s lips pulled up in a slight smile, amused. “You said to do what was best for him. As his doctor, I determined that a life lived frozen was the most appropriate course of action.”

Will stared at him for a few seconds before his arousal was almost completely replaced by rage. He was angry that Hannibal had taken this opportunity to once again surprise him, manipulate him, and mock him. Perhaps even more than all that, he was angry that Hannibal had subverted him. Mason Verger deserved to die, and Will was angry that Hannibal had not taken the bait and done it himself.

As if sensing his frustration, Hannibal’s smile widened. “What would you have me do, Will?”

Smug bastard. Will stared him down, knowing full well that Hannibal had manipulated this situation to force him into making a choice of either actively killing Mason (by proxy, since Hannibal was obviously more than happy to do it himself, he just wanted to hear Will say it) or admitting that he hadn’t fully embraced his killer instinct after all. Hannibal was testing him, in a way so conniving that Will was impressed - and infuriated at being impressed.

He should have expected this. Will was dealing with the Chesapeake Ripper after all, an intelligent psychopath that experienced feelings. Will should’ve known that he would fully test Will’s motivations, no matter how much he wanted to believe in his becoming.

Will remained silent, mulling over the facts and trying to come up with the best option. Hannibal seemed content to wait - curious, like always, about what Will would do.

Finally, Will spoke. “You’re right. A long life lived frozen is worse than a quick death. We’ll take him to the hospital, one far enough away that it won’t be suspicious. In a bad part of

town too, so that there won't be working cameras and so that Mason can really get the -" Will paused to sneer at the unconscious man on the chair, "- pig's experience."

Hannibal nodded once, accepting Will's decision. They moved without speaking, intrinsically knowing through their connection how to carry Mason to the Verger car and load him into the back, careful to support his head. Will found himself wishing that Hannibal would be less careful with him and let his head smack against the car, killing him easily and saving them both a lot of trouble.

Once Mason was settled, Will locked up his dogs and grimaced at the blood matted on their fur. He would need to give them all baths, but that could wait until tomorrow. He walked back to the car where Hannibal waited patiently, and didn't say a word as the older man slid into the driver's seat and Will climbed into the passenger's. Soon, they were flying down the highway towards whatever town Hannibal decided would serve Will's demands best.

Will didn't want to think about what just transpired. The rage, desire, and darkness he felt from watching Hannibal (almost) kill someone were still swirling under his skin and he needed to distract himself. He glanced over at Hannibal's profile and noticed, for the second time, dried blood clinging to his temple.

"Are you hurt?" Will asked, quiet. He did not ask who hurt him, because he knew Hannibal would've already killed them. Will supposed he was just surprised to see Hannibal bleed. It was a markedly human thing, and *human* wasn't a word he had used to describe Hannibal in quite some time.

"Not severely," Hannibal replied, eyes fixated on the road ahead of him. "A small cut. I will tend to it later, no need to concern yourself."

Will snorted and ignored him, opening the glove compartment in front of him and rummaging around the various papers until he found what he was looking for. He wet the napkin with spit before reaching over to boldly dab at the cut on Hannibal's temple.

The older man inhaled sharply at his touch but did not move, and Will took that as his consent to continue. He cleaned up the blood on Hannibal's face the best he could considering the circumstances, knowing that Hannibal didn't quite know what to feel about his concern.

Will didn't know what he was feeling either, to be honest. Cleaning Hannibal up was an impulsive decision done both for the distraction and for the spite of going directly against Hannibal's wishes. But the spite wasn't nearly as filling as the care he felt when he tenderly brushed blood off Hannibal's cheek, and rather than a distraction from his feelings the action pushed him deeper into their depths.

What happened tonight was not what he had planned for. Will fully expected himself to step in and intervene at the cusp of Mason Verger's death, not for his sake necessarily but in order to arrest Hannibal for a crime that stuck. However, when Will found himself in that very situation, he made no move to do so. Instead he stood by and watched, eagerly and breathlessly, as Hannibal snapped a man's neck.

Will thought about how maybe this whole thing was starting to get away from him. The plan with Jack, his own vision of catching Hannibal. Will realized he had changed somehow, between getting out of prison and right now.

He wasn't sure what that meant for him. Will was still angry at Hannibal, that much was clear, but it seemed like his other feelings about Hannibal were growing stronger and threatening to overtake the anger. They *had* overtaken his anger, tonight.

It was not too late. After their errand together, Will could call Jack and tell him what Hannibal had done to Mason Verger. It may not be attempted murder, but Will thought Jack could get Hannibal on felony assault. Hannibal would be locked away in a cell, far away from Will. It was a possibility.

But Will didn't spend too much time thinking about it before violently denying it. He didn't want to face the reasons why, but he didn't want Hannibal in a cell. He didn't want him dead, either. Not anymore.

These realizations made Will's hand pause, hovering above Hannibal's mostly clean face. Right now, in this moment, he didn't want Hannibal in prison for killing Mason Verger, even though he could easily make sure it happened. The certainty of his thoughts hit him with a wave of nausea because they went against everything he had previously thought about himself and his motivations.

Will settled back in his seat, pulling away from Hannibal's space, and tried to convince himself the reason why he wasn't going to turn Hannibal in for this was because he didn't want Mason Verger to have justice. It wasn't because he wanted Hannibal to live without punishment after all the lives he had taken, after all he had done to Will.

Wasn't it?

Will wasn't sure anymore, and as he tried not to think about it, Hannibal's words to him from months before echoed in his head. *Doing bad things to bad people makes you feel good.*

And even months before that – *You are alone. Because you are unique.*

Will recalled his response to that, perhaps even more true now than when he said it. *I'm as alone as you are. And we're both alone, without each other.*

"We're here," Hannibal announced quietly, startling Will. He realized the car had stopped moving and looked out the window to find them idling in the emergency drive of a very dilapidated hospital. The lights were flickering on and off, the security cameras were brokenly dangling from their posts, and at this time of night there was nobody around.

Will nodded and they got out of the car together, again no words needing to be said at this part. They laid Mason on the sidewalk outside the emergency room like yesterday's trash and quickly returned to the car, Will automatically heading towards the passenger side door.

A shadow moved past him and suddenly Hannibal stood in front of him, blocking his way to the car and staring at him. Will stopped to meet his eyes, and saw all the terrible darkness he felt inside staring back at him through Hannibal's eyes with a thousand other emotions intertwined, the most potent one being yearning.

Will was frozen as Hannibal advanced on him, drowning in the depths of his emotion. When Hannibal got close enough that Will could hear his fast breathing, their bodies almost touching, Will licked his lips and mindlessly took a small step closer. He was still staring into Hannibal's dark eyes, close enough now that Will could see how dilated his pupils were. Will could feel Hannibal's breath caress his lips, and it was only when Hannibal broke their gaze

to drop on Will's lips that Will gasped and moved away from the unfulfilled promise of Hannibal's mouth on his.

He quickly opened the door to climb into the passenger's seat and desperately tried to slow his heart rate by taking deep breaths. Will heard Hannibal get into the driver's side over the rush of blood in his ears but ignored him, his head stubbornly turned towards the window. He could hear Hannibal's split-second of hesitation before he decided to remain silent and put the car in drive. Will exhaled in relief and glanced at the time on the dash.

Although it felt like hours, they were outside the car for less than 2 minutes before Hannibal was speeding them away back the way they came, out of range of the hospital's glow and into the night.

End Notes

After this, Mizumono happens ~

I'm planning a season 3 rewrite so there will be more of this! Let me know if you liked it, kudos and comments are appreciated :)

Follow me on twitter for freak-outs about Mads' fangs and good, fun content!

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